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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the teacher education reforms of the 1980's but focuses on an area which has remained constant and unchanged, specifically the criteria for and selection of cooperating teachers. Two examples of reform programs in Oregon are discussed. Both programs represent a professional development center concept model with collaborative arrangements between universities and school districts, as described in reform literature. A requirement for preservice teachers is a year-long internship with a gradual progression from observation to full teaching responsibility, and coursework concurrent with field experiences which integrate theory and practice. Criteria for the selection of cooperating teachers include 3 years of teaching experience, demonstrated competence in teaching, ability to work cooperatively with others, and preparation in supervising and evaluating preservice teachers and their experiences. The selection process includes application with written statements of intent by the potential mentor, recommendations from teacher peers, and review and selection by a panel representing university faculty, school district administrators, and teachers. (LL)

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CRITERIA AND SELECTION OF COOPERATING TEACHERS INVOLVED IN ALTERNATIVE TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMS

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CRITERIA AND SELECTION OF COOPERATING TEACHERS INVOLVED IN ALTERNATIVE TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMS

This paper was first proposed with the assumption that the teacher education program examples to be described had achieved effective criteria and selection procedures. Serious attention and development work had been directed to the process of identifying cooperating teachers. In the months since the proposal, questions have arisen about the process and concerns have been raised about the individuals selected. The questions and concerns led to the reflection which became the theme of this paper. The reflection demanded a review of the current status of and changes in criteria and selection of cooperating teachers, specifically in the context of teacher education reform. Understanding the range and limits of criteria and the selection process required consideration of the relationships with other teacher education processes and components. We began with a question for reflection.

Teacher Education Reform: Have We Been Spinning Our Wheels?

The 1980's witnessed a reform movement in teacher education --- a movement spurred by an accumulation of research knowledge about teaching and teacher education, by commitments and concerns from every professional level. It was truly a national movement. Reform was inspired by "designs" from the profession's best scholars, led by prestigious commissions of experts, and pushed by state and federal involvement. As we enter the 90's, the dust from the

reform movement begins to settle. It's a good time to look at what the movement accomplished, before the winds of discontent stir the profession again. And so we asked, "What was reformed? What was not reformed?"

Reviewing Teacher Education Reform: Changes Accomplished

The theme for the reform movement in teacher education was professionalism. Models from other professional preparations became the guideposts and the following major changes were urged:

1) upgrade of admission requirements,

2) revision of program format, content and instruction,

3) upgrade of standards for evaluation,

4) development of institutional arrangements.

We look first at the changes which we can list in response to the query of what was reformed, and begin with admission requirements.

Admission Requirements. With respect to entry requirements for teacher education, most reform proposals recommended that a baccalaureate degree be required, and that undergraduate work include subject matter content studies and an emphasis upon studies in liberal arts (Smith, 1980; NEA, 1982; Carnegie, 1986; Holmes, 1986). In addition, the Holmes Group (1986) identified an admission goal in the report, Tomorrow's Teachers. The goal, "To create standards of entry to the profession -examinations and educational requirements -that are professionally relevant and intellectually defensible," The report echoed the intent of most preceding proposals for rigorous standards of admission.

Most states reported the establishment of minimum academic achievement requirements by 1985 (Darling-Hammond, & Berry, 1988). The improvement of admission standards was such a critical issue in reform that state mandates were a common response. At least 17 states have adopted admission tests, and 13 states have adopted minimum grade point averages to screen candidates to teacher education (Goertz, 1985, p. 20). For those programs reporting this change, the result is a smaller, carefully selected cadre of preservice teacher education candidates.

Program Format, Content, and Instruction. Changes in teacher education programs overall were significantly influenced by the change from undergraduate to graduate level in many cases. At both levels, however, the first theme for program reform was one of "tightening," with few or no elective courses, and of "competency" described in terms of "knowledge of the research and experiential bases for teaching skills" (AACTE, 1985). The goal of program reform was "a new professional curriculum based upon knowledge of teaching" (Carnegie, 1986).

As teacher education institutions developed and revised program format and content, program emphasis varied with institutions. Coursework at the University of Virginia has been organized into blocs, minimizing the traditional subject specific methods and promoting a generic concept of teaching (Weinstein, 1988). The New Jersey Provisional Teacher Program spaced the 200 hours of instruction in teaching over

the year in a sequence and with a concentration that flexed with life in classrooms. The instruction focused on broad topics of curriculum and instruction, classrooms and schools, student learning and development (Natriello, 1988). The TRA (Teachers for Rural Alaska) program focused the content and instruction of teacher education on the problems and situations of the context of teaching in Alaskan rural communities. Teaching was conceptualized as a design activity and coursework and assignments were formatted to promote the concept (Noordhoff, & Kleinfeld, 1987). The PROTEACH preservice program at the University of Florida at Gainesville is designed to prepare teachers who make decisions based on research. The foundation of the PROTEACH program is a body of generic research on teaching organized into domains, competencies, and behaviors.

The second theme of program reform was for "increased and improved practice opportunities in schools". Recommendations called for year-long internships (Evertson, Hawley, & Zlotnik, 1985), extensive field-based experience throughout the program (NEA, 1982), and opportunities for observation of expert demonstrations, and protected practice and feedback (Joyce & Weil, 1986). The Handbook of Research on Teacher Education (Houston, 1990) reported increased early field experiences for an increase of total hours of field experience. Simbol & Summers (1984) report the average length of student teaching to be 7 to 16 weeks.

Evaluation Standards. The call for reform of standards for evaluation of teacher candidates upon completion of

programs included the development of professional teacher examinations, exit competencies, and standards of practice (Darling-Hammond, 1984; Holmes, 1986; ATE, 1986). There are numerous examples of assessment reforms which include statewide examples such as those in Texas, Florida, and Georgia. Intensive efforts are directed to the development of a model for measuring teacher effectiveness at the Stanford Teacher Assessment Project (Shulman, 1987)

Institutional Arrangements. The name given to the kind of institutional arrangements proposed by the teacher education reform movement is professional development centers. These centers are described in numerous proposals as "alliances between teacher education institutions and public schools," (ATE, 1986), "training complexes combining the resources of universities, communities and school districts" (Smith, 1980). Many reformers made mention of the Teacher Corps model, and the teacher centers of the 70's. Basically, this reform recommendation was aimed at collaboration between universities and schools in the preparation of teachers. In instances where the professional development center concept was taken seriously, the center has taken on a more comprehensive mission than one of preservice teacher development. Those involved in such efforts at Michigan State University see the development as a long range process with multiple outcomes all aimed at improvement of practice (Kennedy, 1990).

We answered the question, "What was reformed?" with an

impressive list of changes and examples of each. The changes prompted by the reform movement of the 1980's included: rigorous new admission standards for prospective teachers, improved content reflecting professional practice and increased field experiences, increased standards and procedures for evaluation of candidates, and awareness of and efforts toward collaborative arrangements for the preparation of teachers.

Review of Teacher Education Reform: Evidence of Constancy

Our second question, "What was not reformed?" took some probing. Even within some of the changes achieved, we found evidence of constancy in teacher education. For example, within the program changes in teacher preparation, we found minimal attention given to the varying roles of professionals involved in program implementation. AACTE's commission called for faculty in teacher education programs "to possess skills in teaching, research, and supervision" (1985). Thus far, it seems that the quality of instruction of teacher education programs has remained constant. In fact, early criticism of the reform movement is already pointing to this component as an obstacle to real change.

Another lack of change within the reforms in teacher education programs was the lack of criteria or selection process for those involved in field experiences--supervisors and cooperating teachers or mentors. We have increased the amount of practice in classrooms, thus making the practicum a more significant part of the preparation process, but may have neglected the quality of the experience.

There was a concern expressed in the recommendations for this change as Berliner described such reform:

> "A significant portion of teacher training should occur in laboratory settings with live students to teach concepts to, with expert teachers to provide analysis and critiques of lessons, and with environments fostering experiments in producing cognitive and affective changes in children" (1985).

There were real implications in Berliner's initiative for criteria and selection of cooperating teachers/mentors and field experience settings. This is perhaps the area of greatest constancy when the reform movement is reviewed. So, while we have increased the role of these individuals in teacher education by increasing the time spent learning from them, we have not reformed the process of selection of these individuals. This paper contends that lack of criteria and selection of those individuals who guide preservice teachers in their field experiences may indeed be responsible for the concern in our question, "Have we been spinning our wheels?".

Lessons From The Past: Avoiding The Ruts

When we reviewed teacher education literature, we saw conclusions reached long before reform that support field experiences as the most essential aspect of the preparation process (Conant, 1963; Lortie, 1975), and cooperating teachers as the primary influence. In fact, there is little debate that the cooperating teacher's role is influential and essential in learning to teach (Koehler, 1984; Yee, 1969).

We also saw concern regarding such influence, specifically, that it may negate the preservice teacher's learning from other program content. Goodlad (1990) in a recent criticism of teacher education expressed this concern, "Thousands of future teachers, engaged in the student teaching part of their preparation programs, found themselves not testing ideas they were itching to try out but adapting to expectations set out for them and their mentors" (p. 185). This concern is not a new expression. The value of field experience has been repeatedly questioned (Griffin, Barnes, Hughes, O'Neal, Defino, Edwards, & Hukill, 1983; Zeichner, 1980). Dewey (1938) offered guidance to teacher education with:

> The belief that all genuine education comes about through experience does not mean all experiences are genuinely or equally educative. Experience and education cannot be directly equated with each other. For some experiences are miseducative. Any experience is miseducative that has the effect of arresting or distorting the growth of further experience (p.25).

Some of our research on the influence of cooperating or mentor teachers has suggested such miseducation. Preservice teachers "almost exclusively model the teaching of the cooperating teacher" (Zimpher, deVoss, & Nott, 1980). They turn to the practical routines and standards established in the classroom, often neglecting the theory and knowledge presented in the university program.

The very context of field experience practica is one which encourages miseducation. During this practice, preservice teachers are faced with the dilemma of successfully surviving the realities of the classroom and in

the process, develop "utilitarian teaching perspectives" (Zeichner, 1980). Survival encourages acceptance of the status quo of the classroom and maintenance of practices already in place. This may be a miseducative process.

In addition to the influence of the cooperating teacher and the context of field experience practica, the biography of the preservice teacher contributes to the continuation of traditional practices in the classroom (Lortie, 1975). Each preservice teacher has spent thousands of hours in the classroom prior to entering teacher education. Those hours of experiences are brought to the field experience, and generally result in propagation of the status quo. If the practice experience is to have an impact in "altering earlier and conservative ideas about teaching" (Zeichner, 1980), preservice teachers will need to observe, work with, be guided by powerful models. As we review the practices in selection of these models, it is clear that we have been stuck in old habits. Goodlad again criticizes with, "...the education of new teachers has virtually guaranteed that the status quo of education would be protected" (p. 185).

Criteria for and Selection of Cooperating/Mentor Teachers

In 1970, the selection of the cooperating teacher was most often based on such criteria as a master's degree, teaching in the area of major preparation, and recommendation by school administration or teacher education institution (Gregory, 1970). In more recent literature, an examination of the selection process reveals the same

characteristics, with recommendation by public school administrators as the most frequent selection criteria (Kingen, 1984). In addition, willingness to work with a preservice teacher is often a major selection criteria (Howey, 1983). We find little evidence of change in the criteria for and selection of the significant role models from which preservice teachers "learn to teach." The recent Handbook of Research on Teacher Education barely mentions study of these models. Perhaps further study was not warranted until we truly achieve reform of this component of teacher education. We intend to regain momentum in our movement to reform, and seek insights about the constants and how to make the necessary changes. We turn to two examples of teacher education, both demonstrating extensive change.

Two Reform Examples

The Cooperative Professional Education Program (CPEP) developed by Portland State University and Beaverton/Portland School Districts and Pacific University's Cooperative Fifth Year/MAT Program represent the kind of collaborative arrangements between universities and school districts described in reform literature. Both programs have attended to the changes recommended by the reform movement.

First, both CPEP and the Fifth Year/MAT program are representative of how reform changed admission requirements. Both require a bachelor's degree with specialized subject matter preparation for secondary education and broad liberal arts preparation for elementary education. Both programs require an exemplary G.P.A., above average scores on

standardized tests (N.T.E., CBEST), experience and related recommendations from work with children or adolescents, and demonstration of reflectivity in simulated group problem solving and dilemmas. The result of these admission changes is a smaller, carefully selected cadre of teacher education candidates.

Both program examples have periodically undertaken complete revision of content, and always with input from university and school district representatives and former students. Coursework in both programs has been streamlined to meet specific competency objectives, revised to promote research understanding and use, and taught in a format which encourages an integrated approach to practice. Both programs are characterized by a year-long internship with a gradual progression from observation to full teaching responsibility, and coursework concurrent with field experiences. The format of concurrent coursework and classroom experience is designed to promote the integration of theory and practice.

The Cooperative Professional Education Program and the Cooperative Fifth Year/MAT program have made significant changes in evaluation procedures to include the use of NTE exams, examination of a portfolio documenting competencies, and a competency review by university and school district representatives. In addition, both programs have been the continued focus of research and evaluation efforts (Nagel & Driscoll, 1991; Driscoll & Strouse, 1986; Nagel, 1988).

Because these teacher education examples represent the

professional development center concept proposed by reform, the collaboration process has promoted and enabled other changes, specifically those which look like constants in the national movement. Classroom teachers have had regular input in course development and revision, thereby influencing the content of the programs. The programs are coordinated by faculty with demonstrated teaching and supervision expertise, established research and development agendas focused on teacher education. There is financial support for the hiring of experts to teach and guide in specific areas of content and pedagogy. This support is directed to the highest quality of instruction and the modeling of what is taught.

Within the programs, extensive work has been directed to criteria for and selection of cooperating teachers/mentors. The cooperative relationships between the universities and the school districts have enabled candid discussion of the research literature and potential influence of these models. Both programs have adopted criteria which include three years of teaching experience, demonstrated competence in teaching, ability to work cooperatively with others, preparation in supervising and evaluating preservice teachers and their experiences. The selection process includes application with written statements of intent by the potential mentor, recommendations from teacher peers, review and selection by a panel representing university faculty, and school district administrators and teachers. The panel review sessions and deliberations have been thoughtful and selective.

At first glance, the answer to the questions posed at

the start of this work was that the Cooperative Professional Education Program and the Cooperative Fifth Year/MAT Program have made changes in response to the majority of reform proposals. Very little constancy was found in the programs. Yet, from within the programs, was the nagging sentiment, "Have we been spinning our wheels?" as we moved with reform.

Listening Beyond The Answers

Listening to the preservice teachers in both programs suggests a rut parallel to that in which the national reform movement appears to be stuck. Their comments in seminar, discussions in class, and concerns in supervisory conferences reveal traces of miseducation. Both teacher education program examples feature concurrent coursework and field experience, so preservice teachers regularly assess coursework in light of field experience, and vice versa. Our questions and concerns over the field experience quality began with those assessments. Several scenarios illustrate the questions raised and suggest our concerns:

When preservice teachers studied lesson and unit planning, their assignment was to be bring samples of plans from their field site. Only 1 elementary plan and 1 secondary plan, from a preservice group of 26 and 21 respectively, were brought to class. There was a kind of relief and excitement as the elementary group hovered over the one example, pointing out features they had studied in planning. Many of the students reported that the only plan samples they observed were nothing more than a schedule of textbook pages.

After reading the research on effective use of seatwork and reviewing quality samples of seatwork, elementary preservice teachers expressed concern over the multitude of repetitious seatwork children faced in their classrooms.

For three weeks, sessions focused on multi-forms of assessment to meet the diversity of learners and learning

outcomes. Secondary preservice teachers reported seeing only one kind or form of assessment.

When classroom management models were presented, especially those emphasizing communication and a classroom climate of trust, preservice teachers at both levels worriedly reported examples of threats, distrust of students, favoritism, and punishments of entire classes for one student's behavior.

These are just a few. At this time, examples and scenarios are being collected and analyzed for evidence of consistency and inconsistency between the content of coursework and the content of field experiences. We realize in our conversations with both preservice and cooperating teachers that there are differences in perceptions of a singular incident. Carter (1991) suggested that knowledge use in teaching is dependent on comprehension of the knowledge and interpretation of the classroom situation.

Can We Move Forward?

It is disconcerting to realize that even with serious attention to criteria for and selection of cooperating teachers, that those models may negate our teacher education program intent. We are faced with the lack of specificity in our criteria, "demonstrated competence in teaching." These are the questions and doubts we face. Our intent is to scrutinize the forthcoming examples of consistency and inconsistency in our collaborative groups. At the same time, we will encourage more dialogue among our cooperating teachers, preservice teachers, and ourselves toward comprehension and interpretation of the current knowledge base. This may be the move we seek in reform of teacher education, so that "we won't be spinning our wheels."

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